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The Obedience of the Clergy and the Mission of the Church of England

A PAPER READ AT SION COLLEGE
ON WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8

BY

W. SANDAY, D.D., LL.D.

LADY MARGARET PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY, AND CANON OF CHRIST CHURCH
HONORARY FELLOW OF EXETER

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST

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THE OBEDIENCE OF THE CLERGY

AND THE

MISSION OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

I PURPOSELY link together what may seem to be a question of the moment with the most comprehensive phrase I can find to cover the character and work, the ideals and tendencies of the Church to which we belong; because it seems to me very desirable that the one should be judged in the light of the other, that the action of the moment should not merely be determined by the needs of the moment, but that we should look back, and round, and forward, if our action is to be really wise.

It is perhaps most important that we should look forward. We want to see where we are going. We want to take account of the dangers as well as of the opportunities that lie before us.

And first, I shall ask to be forgiven if I spend a few words upon a topic which is no doubt very trite and threadbare; I mean the danger of Disestablishment.

It is the more necessary to speak of this, because we cannot disguise from ourselves that recent events have brought that danger nearer to us than it has perhaps ever been before. In the present temper of the two extreme wings of our Church, it is not likely that the

resistance offered to Disestablishment will be as united as in the past; and the balance of political power is easily altered.

I cannot share the opinion of those who see in Disestablishment a way of escape from our difficulties. I believe it to be more probable that it would seriously aggravate them. But in thinking of Disestablishment, we need to keep clear in our minds two or three quite different things.

It would not be difficult to imagine circumstances in which Disestablishment might be the less of two evils. If there was a clear collision between duty to Caesar and duty to God; if there was but one alternative, and the connexion with the State could only be maintained by the sacrifice of vital principle; if the Church had waited long for its rights, and waited for them in vain, then we should not be at a loss what to choose. But I do not think that any such dilemma is before us yet.

Again, it is quite possible that Disestablishment may be forced upon us from without. In that case it should certainly be met manfully, and with a good courage; our first duty would be to put away vain regrets and recrimination, and gird ourselves to the work of reconstruction.

But it is one thing to face such contingencies if they should arise, and another thing to go out to meet them, or hasten their approach by our own act and deed.

I know that there are some who would do this; and I think that I can understand their motives. A vigorous man of sanguine temperament, whose heart is in his work, and who is without sordid cares, may well think that he and others like him would pursue their way with fewer impediments if the Church were disestablished.

I would ask such an one to reconsider the grounds on which he bases his opinion. Is there really any clergy

or ministry in the whole of Christendom which enjoys greater personal freedom than our own? We see conspicuous examples of this every day. The very crisis through which we have been passing has furnished them in abundance. This high standard of liberty holds good as well for the laity as the clergy, but especially for the clergy. In their case it is not easy to see how Disestablishment would affect them for the better, and it is easy to see how it might affect them for the worse, by laying them open to increased pressure, both from above and from below.

And if it is replied that Disestablishment is not sought for the sake of individuals, but for the sake of the Church as a corporate body, I would ask whether we have as yet at all exhausted the possibilities of what may be done by voluntary action behind the screen of the State connexion. The policy of appeal to such action is as yet a new policy. And I earnestly hope that it may have a much longer and fuller trial before it is discarded. Do not let us pronounce the patient's condition hopeless with the best remedies only half tried.

When we let our thoughts wander from the flourishing centres of Church life in the towns to others that are less prosperous,—when we think of the cry of distress that comes to us from the country districts, and of the strain that is felt through the whole vast machine in carrying out the multitudinous tasks which are at present imposed upon it—not to speak of those which ought to be undertaken and are not—the imagination is staggered to realize what would happen if all the advantages, material and moral, of the State connexion were withdrawn. Let me put two questions. What is to become of the building of new churches, to keep pace with the growth and shifting of population, if the whole cost of maintaining and manning the old churches is to fall upon

voluntary contributions? And what is to become of the second great charge upon our parishes for education in the principles of the Church, if the first charge for the maintenance of the ministry is all to come from the same resources? That must inevitably mean the starving of many souls.

It is not surprising that Nonconformists should envy us. If we could obliterate history and look merely at the rivalry between different religious bodies, it would be true that we start with a great and what might seem to be an unfair advantage. But as it is, we hold our own by full historic right; it is a stewardship entrusted to us for the glory of God and for the service of His people; and that solemn charge is not to be lightly thrown away.

There is, however, a further step in the perspective. If the Church were disestablished can we be sure that that would be all? Does there not loom behind it the shadow of a greater evil still, viz. Disruption?

Our Church is peculiarly open to such a danger as this. Its weakest point is, that it is the least homogeneous of Churches. Hitherto, its various sections have been held together by the mild and, as I believe, on the whole salutary compulsion of the State. What would happen if that mild compulsion were removed? Would it be strange if the discordant atoms were to fly asunder? I do not doubt that a very great effort would be made to prevent this. I do not doubt that there would be a great rallying round the old standard, and that the mass of sober and thoughtful men would do their utmost to keep the extremes from breaking away. But we must face the fact, that the antagonism of these extremes to each other is very strong, and that both are liable to powerful attraction from without. At the best, the years which followed Disestablishment must be an anxious and troubled time; and what the ultimate issue would be God alone knows.

Happily what is from one point of view our weakest point is from another our strongest; and it is just this which seems to constitute the special mission of the Church of England in the world. Our Church is the meeting-ground of Catholicism and Protestantism—and of both we will hope at their best; of Catholicism in its love for the past, its sense of communion with the early saints, its chastened piety; and of Protestantism not so much on its negative side as on its positive, its moral seriousness, its effort after intellectual sincerity and direct personal relation of the soul to God.

I have often thought it a defect in the theology of modern Protestant Germany, which at the present moment stands first in Europe for enterprise, activity and learning, that it holds itself so aloof from the whole world of Catholicism. It is apt to treat Catholicism as a negligible quantity, or only as an enemy to be fought. It may perhaps be reserved for us to redress the balance.

On the other hand, we cannot but note the interest that is felt in some of the best Roman circles, especially among the younger French clergy and cultivated laity, in such endeavours as we are making to keep abreast with the tide of advancing science and criticism. They feel that we approach this ground in a spirit that is less alien from their own, and they hope to profit by our experience.

We can point with pride to the harmonizing and reconciling work done by the Church of England in the past. Our history exhibits types of character and piety neither wholly Catholic nor wholly Protestant, but in a manner blending the excellences of both. We cherish the memory of men like Bernard Gilpin, and Hooker, and Andrewes, and Hammond, and Ken, and the poets Herbert and Vaughan. We seek our models in Walton's *Lives* and in the community of Little Gidding.

But we must not be content with propounding an

example in the distant past. The fusion which the Caroline divines and Churchmen to a larger extent succeeded in effecting, was a living and organic fusion; and we should aim at bringing about a fusion which is equally living and organic in our own day. It would not become us to boast, but as I look around, I cannot think that the call has come to us wholly in vain.

This then is the position. There lie before us certain pressing dangers—dangers no longer remote, but within very measurable distance—dangers which may involve the serious break-up of our Church as an organized branch of Christendom, and in great part wreck and ruin the special work that we are called upon to do. If we would avoid these dangers and rise to the height of our vocation, we need before all things the spirit of union; we need the felt harmony of all ranks and classes, the silencing of internal dissensions, willingness to sink sectional aims, and to combine for the common cause.

Under this head I would bring the Obedience of the Clergy. I would venture to put it upon the highest Christian ground, as expressed in Phil. ii. 4: *μὴ τὰ ἑαυτῶν ἕκαστοι σκοποῦντες, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ ἑτέρων ἕκαστοι.* The expressive Greek can hardly be translated, but it may perhaps be paraphrased as meaning that the Christian conscience should be sensitive as to its own obligations to others, and not so sensitive as to the obligations of others to itself. Applying this we see that there are a number of correlative duties. If we expect the rank and file of the clergy to show a spirit of dutifulness and discipline, it is no less incumbent upon the higher ranks to put no greater strain upon obedience than they are compelled, to demand only what is reasonable, and to see that it is presented in a reasonable form. And further, it is most desirable that the historic parties in the Church should as far as possible abstain from attacking and

harassing each other, and should treat each other with mutual respect and consideration.

Perhaps I may be allowed to enlarge a little on these points.

1. In speaking of the Obedience of the Clergy we are not at the present moment dealing with an abstract or academic question, but with a matter of immediate urgency which is exercising the minds and consciences of many among us. We cannot separate the general question from the particular situation caused by the recent decision of the Archbishops. In regard to this, I must needs confess that the view which I had formed for myself on the spur of the moment, although I do not think that it is wrong, and although I should be content with it as a guide to my own action, is inadequate to meet the real necessities of the case as they must present themselves to those who are more directly concerned.

I took the view that obedience to the command or expressed wish of a superior is an entirely different thing from assent to the wisdom or justice of that command. It seemed to me that if the authority of the superior was a legitimate authority, obedience was rendered to it as such and not out of regard to the nature of what was commanded. It seemed to me that moral responsibility for the contents of the command belonged to him by whom it was given and not to him by whom it was obeyed.

It must, however, be recognized that this principle holds good only up to a certain point. So long as the thing commanded was in itself a matter of indifference or minor moment, the authority of the superior would have full play and there would be no conflict of duties. But as soon as the demand went beyond this and touched a point that appealed directly to the conscience or raised a question of principle, the claim of authority and the claim of principle

come into collision, and it would be necessary to make up one's mind which of the two was the stronger.

That is the unfortunate position in which many of those who have been called upon to obey the Archbishops' decision have been placed. At first I was inclined to think that the personal authority of that decision and of the Bishops communicating it to their clergy clearly preponderated. I still think that obedience (i. e. sufficient obedience) under some kind of protest is the right course. But I cannot help recognizing, in view of later discussions, that the case for disobedience is stronger than I had supposed.

It does not by any means follow that I can agree with, or even attach much weight to all the arguments that have been put forward. Some that are formidable in appearance I think we may safely reject.

Stress has been laid upon the fact that the Archbishops' decision in regard to incense turns upon the interpretation of a single clause in the Elizabethan Act of Uniformity, which was itself an act of the State unratified by Convocation. The Archbishops contended that although the consent of Convocation was not obtained at the time it was practically given by the retrospective effect of the adoption by the Church of the later Act of 1662. Something has been said upon the other side; but so far as I can judge I should on this point be inclined to agree with the Archbishops.

However this may be, I could not sympathize with the opposition to the decision which rests upon this ground. I do not think that we can afford to go back upon the history of our Church to such an extent. The Act in question played too important a part in that history and has been virtually accepted by too many generations of Churchmen for us now to disown it. To do so would be too much as if an heir should tear up the title-deeds

by which he held his estate. At least he cannot do so while he keeps the estate. Granting that there is something of a technical flaw in this particular deed, the flaw has been condoned by more than three hundred years of continuous possession, and those of us who enjoy the advantages of possession are at least debarred from complaint.

The reasons which prevented Elizabeth's Government from obtaining the consent of Convocation were sufficient at the time. The Marian bishops and clergy, as a body, were unwilling to accept the new *régime*; so that the Government had no choice but to act without them. It did what it could, by appointing a commission of spiritual persons to draw up the Service-Book which it proceeded to enforce. The events of Tudor times will not bear to be judged by too severe a standard of legality. All we can say is that if the history of other Churches was scrutinized as closely, they too would be found to present irregularities not less serious than our own.

Another objection is still more sweeping. The view has been put forward that what are called 'ecumenical usages,' i. e. usages common to the Churches which claim to be in the special sense Catholic, can only be withdrawn by the same authority as that by which they are sanctioned; in other words, by the formal consent of those Churches. But there is no longer any machinery for obtaining this consent; so that obviously, if the principle thus laid down were adopted, a National Church like our own would be tied hand and foot. It would have no power of acting for itself in respect to any of these usages; use and abuse alike must be perpetuated for ever.

Not only so, but a great part of what has been done in our Church at and since the Reformation would have to be pronounced *ultra vires*, and therefore invalid. The principle is in fact a denial to the particular Church of any right of self-reformation.

It would be hard to accept a position that had such results, but I believe that it has been proved to be quite untenable. It has been shown that not many usages are 'ecumenical' in the strict sense of *Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus.* It has been shown that even observances that rested on the authority of the Council of Nicaea itself soon fell into disuse and were forgotten. It has been shown that none of the great Churches have hesitated to change prevailing customs on their own authority. Our own Church has claimed the right to do this in very unequivocal terms (Art. xxxiv); and it has repeatedly acted upon that right[1].

I think then that these two objections to obedience must be dismissed. But there are yet others, more practical in their character, which seem to deserve closer consideration. I refer, first, to the objection which has been taken to the recent procedure of the Archbishops on the ground that it throws too much weight upon the opinion of individuals who may have many other excellences, but not exactly the qualifications necessary for an authoritative judgement upon highly complex legal and historical questions. The thought which underlies the whole of this paper is, that the best hope for our Church at the present time is in the extension of the voluntary consentient action of its members. For this reason I hailed the course taken by the Archbishops as a bold but promising experiment. We must, however, distinctly recognize that it has this drawback. The Archbishops, wisely, as I think, gave a full hearing to the case, as if they formed a Court. And yet they were not a Court, and they had not the advantages of a Court. To decide an issue really so intricate as that before them would have taxed the ability and learning of a whole bench

[1] See especially a communicated Article on Liturgical Uniformity in the *Guardian* for August 30, 1899.

of judges. As it was, they faced it, as I believe, with absolute fearlessness and honesty, but at the same time with the limitations attaching to strong common sense in matter where something more than common sense was required.

The consequence has been that their decision is questioned. And the fact that it is questioned has led some to refuse to obey it, on the ground that to obey would be a bad precedent, and that the same thing might happen again. It seems to me that this is a real difficulty; and I am not sure that my own answer to it is adequate. My answer would be that the principle involved is so valuable that it is worth while to put up with a certain amount of miscarriage. I could not defend the action of the Archbishops as being above criticism in itself, but as the best course that seemed open to them under existing circumstances. And I think that they are entitled to all possible consideration, not only from the bystanders who have watched their proceedings, but even from those against whom they have pronounced.

The only really satisfactory solution is to be sought in the complete revision and reform of the constitution of our Church, including its judicature. For this we should work to the best of our power.

The other practical objection is not one that I should care to bring myself; but it must come with great force to those to whom it is addressed. It is that, as a matter of fact, looking back over the history of the Catholicizing party, its greatest gains have been won really by disobedience. The most effective weapon in the hands of the party has been the willingness of its members to go to prison. Whether we approve or disapprove, a weapon of this sort is not likely to be surrendered.

There is also, when we think of it, more excuse than might appear upon the surface for refusal to obey in the

circumstances. The object in view has been the revival of Catholic usage. It is contended that such revival is in strict accordance with the historic principles of the Church of England. The usages may have lapsed into desuetude, but the right to them has not lapsed, and is now being reasserted. But the reassertion has come almost entirely from below rather than from above. From the time of Queen Anne onwards, through causes largely political, the Bishops have been taken from the party opposed to revival. They have stood in the way of it as much as they could. They have tried to suppress what was held to be not only lawful, but a right inherent in the constitution and principles of the Church of England from the first. So the one-sided action of the Bishops has provoked an equally one-sided reaction on the part of the clergy.

I could not dispute the facts on which such a line of argument was based. What I would say in reply to it would be something of this kind.

The argument is really at bottom anarchic. It cuts at the root of that harmonious and efficient action which ought to characterize a living Church.

In the last resort such resistance to authority might be justified, but only in the last resort, and when nothing else was possible. Granting that it has been a necessity in the past, is it so still? Is not the Catholic position in its main and essential points secured? And that being the case, is it right to fight outlying details to the bitter end?

We cannot forget that obedience to Bishops is also a Catholic principle. Is it a principle of so much less importance than the use of incense? And would it not be worth some sacrifice to give greater effect to it?

If the time has not yet fully come, I should hope that it is not far distant, when even the more extreme members

of the party might be content to give up the attitude of continual resistance, to enter into the general movement of the Church, and prosecute their cause in more constitutional ways. That they should do this would, it is true, imply that they could count upon equitable and considerate treatment. And that would depend upon the Bishops and upon us neutrals more than upon themselves.

2. This brings me to my two remaining points. I began by laying down that if the clergy go out to meet their Bishops, the Bishops should go halfway to meet them in return. They should exercise the greatest care to require only what is reasonable, and, if possible, only what can be proved to be reasonable; and they should so enlist conscience on their side, instead of provoking it to opposition.

If we look round at what has happened since the Archbishops gave their decision, I think it will be felt that much that has been done on both sides has satisfied these conditions. There has been a great amount of voluntary submission—all the more valuable because of its evident reluctance—on the part of the clergy; and there has been an equal amount of sympathetic and considerate action on the part of the Bishops. I could not, for instance, easily imagine anything much more perfect than the way in which the delicate and difficult issues involved have been dealt with in the diocese of Rochester. And some other dioceses have not been far behind.

Experience has shown that the demand which has been made in what seems to some of us a small matter like incense is not really so small as it seems. Unfortunately the decision has come late in the day. I understand that there are churches in which incense has been in regular use for as much as forty years, and that there are many

more in which it has been used for a considerable part of that time. This means that a whole generation has grown up that has never been accustomed to anything else. And we cannot be surprised that an abrupt cessation of the usual order should be felt, and felt keenly. I am tempted to quote from a letter which was one of many that my recent pamphlet brought me, as expressing a feeling which I do not doubt is widespread among the laity of the congregations:

'What has been felt by many laymen who, like myself, have been accustomed to the use of incense in Divine Worship for many years past, is the utter lack of sympathy shown by our Bishops for those who may be described as the "Catholic-minded laity." The man in the street, the brawler, the ignorant platform orator have all been considered and listened to, but those like the congregation of St. Cuthbert's, Philbeach Gardens, in their most pathetic and united appeal to the Archbishops have been ignored, if not snubbed. . . . Believe me, dear sir, that the giving up the use of incense altogether in Divine Worship is to me and my family a real loss. We were prepared for its regulation by the Bishops, but its total abrogation is a great trial.'

It is quiet worshippers like these who have the strongest claim upon our sympathies. We cannot help feeling that if the use of incense was to be stopped it should have been stopped long ago, before congregations had become so habituated to it. So that in any case, even if it was introduced in the first instance 'without sufficient authority,' there is a divided responsibility of which the ruling powers must take their share.

I know that in their recent decision the Archbishops regarded themselves as bound to interpret the strict letter of the law, and as precluded from going beyond this. They have been accused of other motives, but I could never bear

a part in any such accusation. I believe that their decision was entirely single-minded. My own view, if I were to express it, would be that they were too single-minded. I do not see how it is possible for the Primates of England, the two leading Bishops in the whole Anglican communion, to think only of a clause in the Act of Queen Elizabeth. But even on this narrowest ground can it be said that their decision holds good? At most I should only see in it an error of judgement due to the delusive attractions of simplicity. But even if the conclusion is right, I conceive that the way by which it was reached is very doubtful.

I will not argue over again the case stated in my pamphlet. I wrote not at all as a specialist; and therefore it has been gratifying to me to find that many of the arguments which I used have received independent support from specialists of high distinction [1]. At the same time I could not conceal from myself that they have also met with considerable criticism from writers of no less special knowledge [2]. It is greatly to be desired that the legal and historical issues should be thoroughly threshed out; and I would rather leave this part of the controversy to those whose previous studies have better qualified them to take part in it, and who have more time for the calm research which it would involve. It would be no small public service if some one with the requisite leisure and the requisite self-command would collect, sift, and pass in review the mass of materials and arguments that has

[1] I refer especially to Canon MacColl in the *Fortnightly Review* for September; to Mr. R. W. Burnie's *Examination of the Archbishops' Opinion*; and to the speech of Sir Walter Phillimore at the Oxford Diocesan Conference. There was also an important article on 'Liturgical Uniformity' in the *Guardian* for October 18, which brought new evidence to show that the Elizabethan legislation was not meant to have, and did not have, the restrictive effect attributed to it.

[2] e. g. in the *Times*, the *Rock*, and the *Church Quarterly*. I must also mention, as having much weight with me, the letters of my honoured colleague, Dr. Bright, in the *Guardian*.

accumulated during the last few months, not in the spirit of an advocate, but in the spirit of a judge. The substantial part of investigations such as this should be done, not in the law court, but in the study.

But one effect—perhaps the main effect—of what has passed upon my own mind has been to bring home to me the very unsatisfactory nature of appeals to the documents of the Edwardine and Elizabethan periods. It must be fundamentally unsatisfactory that the whole future course of our Church should be determined, even in minute details, by the hasty and almost makeshift provisions of such a time of troublous transition. Our Church had not as yet become really conscious of itself. Everything was in a state of flux. Tendencies were at work that were rapidly shaping the definite aims and ideals which stood out more clearly some forty or fifty years later. But under Edward VI, and in the first years of Elizabeth, these aims and ideals were not yet evolved. The English Reformation, far more than is the case with any of the Continental Reformations, is not to be identified with the English Reformers. It did not exist in any single mind or group of minds. It was something larger, subtler, at once more comprehensive and more balanced than the ideas of any of its promoters. It was in the true sense a movement national rather than individual. But just for this reason it was also in a measure vague and intangible, and unsuited for fixing in legal definitions.

At the same time the presence in the Church not only of a great Middle Party as yet dimly conscious whether it was moving, but also of two extremes which knew their own minds much better, distinctly contributed to the enrichment of the life of the whole. They were, so to speak, constantly feeding the Middle Party with such elements of their own as it was capable of assimilating. It kept drawing from them fresh nutriment by a process

more natural, more healthy, and more organic, than can ever be produced by set constitutions and exact definitions.

3. And this same process which took place then is taking place now. Still we have within our borders extreme parties which know their own minds better and are more articulate than the great mass of middle opinion; and still this central body is constantly enriching itself from the movements that are going on around it. There is still a constant ebb and flow, of give and take, of action and reaction. It is far better that it should be so, than that our Church should be sunk in a dead uniformity which gave no trouble because it had no life.

No doubt it would greatly simplify matters if we could lay the finger upon a number of conclusions and say, These are absolutely right, and those are absolutely wrong. It is not surprising that those who think they can do this should wish to suppress that with which they do not agree. But we are men, and as men we know in part and we prophesy in part. None of us is in possession of all truth; none of us, we will hope, is entirely devoid of truth. But the harmonizing of these truths is best left to that Supreme Power which works by means of natural processes, and divides to every man severally as He will.

I have no belief in repression as applied to the things of the mind and the spirit, even though I were myself allowed to dictate what should be repressed. If I were asked what is the best type of worship for the Church of England, my own leanings would be all in favour of simplicity and moderation, of that blended type which, as I have said, seems to me to combine the virtues of the two extremes. But I will not undertake to say that this one type is right and others wrong; and I am very sure that it continually gains from having the others at its side.

No doubt it is a question of degree, and we are all of us

compelled to make a stand somewhere. But I hope that attempts to narrow the borders of what is lawful in our Church beyond what they have been in the recent past will fail.

Our parties, as it seems to me, should not be parties of combat but parties of search, emulating one another in the effort to assimilate divine things, provoking to love and to good works, and not to strife. I think that of late there has been too much aggressiveness in more quarters than one. But of that I have said enough elsewhere, and I will not say more. I do not wish to become controversial even in reproof of controversy.

Is there not one object on which we can all combine? Can we not all do what in us lies to bring about that great reform which is the condition precedent of all other reforms —the endowment of our Church with a real representative system? We want a central assembly which shall be really in touch with the whole life of the Church to its remotest corners, and which will therefore command the confidence of the whole Church. We want an assembly in which all men and all parties may meet on a footing of mutual respect and forbearance, in which the majority shall not oppress the minorities, and in which the minorities shall not too much obstruct the will of the majority.

To obtain such an assembly should not be beyond our power; and the ideal which I have sketched of it should not be incapable of realization. It is an ideal already very largely attained in the secular Council of our nation, and in the Parliament of the Church there should be the additional incentive and additional restraint of Christian motive in select Christian men.

When we had got an assembly like this we should be able to go over deliberately the points which most divide us, and obtain a settlement of them which should not turn upon a doubtful interpretation of obscure texts in the far-

off past, but which had direct reference to present realities and actual needs. We should be no longer under the dominion of the 'dead hand' which chills what it touches, but we should obey with alacrity—there would be no excuse for us if we did not obey with alacrity—the expressed mind of the living Church. And in the meantime we should address ourselves to our noblest task of restating Christian truth, and once more embodying the Christian life in forms that appealed to the heart and conscience of to-day.

POSTSCRIPT

It seems to be persistently rumoured, that the Bishops are contemplating action in the near future, which to an onlooker seems strangely ill advised.

Let us recall the history of the Lambeth decision. It was given by the Archbishops in accordance, as they contend, with the Preface to the Prayer Book. This contention has been a good deal challenged, and I am by no means sure that it really holds. I doubt whether the words of the Preface were intended to have so wide a scope, or to cover action so elaborately judicial.

Whether it was so or not is a question which many of us would have liked not to raise. To us the real justification of the Hearing was of a different kind. We preferred to regard it as so much fatherly counsel voluntarily sought and affectionately given. The suggestion as to the form the Hearing took might come from the Preface to the Prayer Book, but that was a secondary matter. The essential feature in what was done, its real virtue, seemed to lie in the voluntary approach on both sides, the mutual confidence to which it gave expression.

Now supposing that everything had gone as well as possible, what should we have seen? The decision of the Archbishops, when it was given, would have been of such a weighty and convincing character, that it would at once have commanded not only obedience but assent. If there

were any details which did not quite carry general opinion along with them, these would not have been pressed out of respect for what was felt to be an earnest effort as a whole. The decision would have been obeyed, and peace would have followed. Better still: a method that had succeeded once would be invoked again; the relation of Bishops and Clergy would have been settled upon the happiest and least contentious lines.

To the great misfortune of the Church this is not what has happened. I impute no serious blame. I certainly impute no unworthy motive. But through that fallibility which attaches to human judgements, the decision actually given has been very far from commanding assent. Even those who have defended it have (if I am not mistaken) done so much less from convinced acceptance of the Archbishops' ruling than from independent reasoning of their own.

In spite of this, the end sought has been very largely attained. The majority of those involved have given way. Only a few remain over who have decided that they cannot yield. We may think them mistaken, but their reasons are at least intelligible.

And now it is said that the decision is to be enforced by pains and penalties against those few. I do not ask how it is to be enforced. It is enough that in some way or other coercion is to be applied.

What are sure to be the consequences of any such action?

(i) All the grace will have gone out of the earlier procedure. There will be no more question of fatherly counsel, and no more question of voluntary appeal to it. Already the willingness to appeal has received a severe shock. Apply coercion, and we shall certainly never hear of it again.

(ii) Those who at much cost to themselves have sub-

mitted to the decision, will at once repent of having done so. They will wish that they had taken their stand by the side of their comrades, whom they had no thought of deserting.

(iii) These incriminated comrades will simply stiffen their backs. They will bear what penalties may be necessary, but they will not give way. A new struggle will begin of which we shall not soon see the end.

(iv) And in the meantime the lovers at once of peace and of order will look sorrowfully on. They will feel that their part is played, and that they can do no more. They will see the strife around them wax hotter and hotter. And their sympathies will be most alienated where they would most wish them to be given.

Set against this the policy of leaving the recalcitrants alone. If they stand out in permanent opposition to their Bishops, the better feeling of their own party will be against them, and their numbers will gradually dwindle. They are nearly all, it is believed, cases in which the laity of the congregations go strongly with their clergy, so that no great hardship will be inflicted upon any one. If the fair opening promise of the recent proceedings has been dashed and blighted, at least no irremediable harm will have been done. It will be possible to wait in patience; and perhaps, when the tumult has subsided, the Sisyphean task of reconciliation may begin again.

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